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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage February 27 on the island's March presidential poll and the UN referendum; on a Taiwan policy report recently released by former U.S. officials Randall Schriver and Dan Blumenthal; on Taiwan's officials being barred from attending South Korea's presidential inauguration because of pressure from China; on soaring domestic prices; and on the Ministry of Economic Affairs' decision to sell a U.S.-based aircraft company, thus incurring losses amounting to US\$388 million. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page four that read "Randall Schriver Calling on Bian, Hsieh and Ma; Bian Hopes Taiwan and the United States Will Establish 2+2 Dialogue Mechanism."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial echoed the report recently released by former U.S. officials Schriver and Blumenthal and emphasized that Washington-Taipei ties should not be placed under the U.S.-China framework. A separate "Liberty Times" op-ed also chimed in, saying the report has pointed out that Washington's Taiwan policy has created unfavorable results for the United States. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" written by a western writer based in Taiwan questioned the mindset of these U.S. "pundits." The article asked whether "these experts really care about a democratic Taiwan, or is their penultimate goal rather the containment of China to ensure that ... no power ever manages to rival U.S. hegemony." End summary.

A) "U.S.-Taiwan Relations Should Not Be Placed under the U.S.-China Framework"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (2/27):

"The 'Taiwan Policy Working Group,' formed by many former U.S. officials and specialists, has recently released its first Taiwan policy report both in the United States and Taiwan. This report did not challenge the United States' current one-China policy, but it did make three recommendations that were noteworthy: First, it urged Washington to remove its restrictions on high-level interaction between the United States and Taiwan. Second, it suggested that the United States take the lead in establishing a values-based multi-lateral organization in Asia, in which Taiwan is included as a member. Third, [it suggested that] U.S.-Taiwan relations have their own agenda and not be placed under the U.S.-China framework. ...

"The U.S. government's restrictions on contacts between U.S. and Taiwan high-ranking officials are not only a move that overlooks the national dignity of democratic Taiwan but are also often a source of friction during the communications between the two sides. For example, Taiwan's referendum on its UN membership are the fundamental human rights of the Taiwan people and a natural result of the operations of Taiwan's democracy. Unfortunately, as a result of the lack of high-level dialogue, the U.S. government misunderstood such

a move by Taiwan and has repeatedly expressed its opposition or lack of support for it. China, which constantly suppresses and attempts to annex Taiwan, instead has benefited from [the U.S. opposition] without any effort or cost. It is evident that the recommendation made by the 'Taiwan Policy Working Group' was truly insightful.

"In addition, Taiwan's participation in international organizations and contributions to international affairs make it a definite creator of benefits to the international community. ... But China is the constant factor that hinders Taiwan's interest in joining international organizations. If the United States turns a blind eye [to China's obstruction] and allows Taiwan to be permanently rejected by international or regional organizations, it would be akin to denying the international community the chance [to be benefited by Taiwan]. It is thus essential for the U.S. government to change its mind by judging from values and assisting Taiwan to play a part in international affairs.

"Moreover, China has asserted again and again that its rise is peaceful, but in reality it has been proactively working to strengthen its military buildup in the absence of any external threat. In addition to annexing Taiwan, China also has the evil ambition to become a regional hegemon and further pursue the position of being an international power. One can say that China's hostility toward Taiwan is just the tip of the iceberg of its threats to world peace. Given such a circumstance, the U.S.-Taiwan relations can by no means be placed under the U.S.-China framework. Or else, China will definitely take advantage of U.S. needs in terms of international issues and will impose pressure on Washington to do things that will harm Washington-Taipei ties. Such a development is by no means good news for the United States' strategic interests in the Western Pacific. ..."

B) "The United States Re-discovers Taiwan -- Comment on the 'Twenty-First Century Agenda for the U.S.-Taiwan Relationship'"

Lai I-chung, member of the executive board of the Taiwan Thinktank, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (2/27):

"... It is worth mentioning that this report has particularly pointed out the effects of the practice adopted by the United States over the past few years, in which Washington chose to work with China in handling the Asian issues -- namely, 'it imposed pressure on Taipei to prevent it from making moves that would be perceived by Beijing as provocative. Taipei, as a result, has been regarded as a trouble or a provoker, not a successful partner.' This indicates that the reason that Taiwan is regarded by the United States as a problem is not necessarily related to Taiwan's behavior; it is also related to the United States' China policy framework.

"Because [Washington] fails to look at Taiwan as a positive factor but rather as a negative factor between Washington-Beijing ties, Washington tends to impose punishments and sanctions against Taipei in the face of the uncertainty created by Taiwan's democracy, the report said. ... This report has pointed out that the U.S. policy toward Taiwan has created unfavorable results for the United States and, as a result, it also pinpoints the mainstream myth in Taiwan when discussing the island's political situation -- namely, that everything will be OK once the island has a new ruling party. ..."

C) "But Are They Really Friends of Taiwan?"

1J. Michael Cole, a writer based in Taipei, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/27):

"Time and again, a handful of individuals in US academia have accused the Bush administration of either abandoning Taiwan or not doing enough to protect it. Again last week, the same pundits issued a report, "Strengthening Freedom in Asia: A Twenty-First Century Agenda for the US-Taiwan Partnership," that at first glance seemed to indicate that Taiwan has friends in high places. But are they really friends? Is the 'freedom' they refer to the universal human right, or is it instead the word cynically used by the Bush administration to justify wars in the Middle East and elsewhere? To

put it differently, do these experts really care about a democratic Taiwan, or is their penultimate goal rather the containment of China to ensure that, as envisioned by Paul Wolfowitz in 1992, no power ever manages to rival U.S. hegemony?

"For the most part, these 'defenders' of Taiwan are hawks at think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Heritage Foundation, the Project for a New American Century and Armitage International. One thing these organizations have in common is their intimate ties to the US defense establishment. In their view, international security is best served through further militarization -- greater investment in weapons, more reliance on force to solve problems and preemptive military action. All, furthermore, tend to ridicule the UN and have served as proponents of a 'Pax Americana.'
...

"These hawks do not really care about democracy; what matters to them, rather, is preserving U.S. hegemony. If that means supporting Taiwan as a hedge -- or an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' -- against China, so be it. But it is hard to imagine these same experts clamoring for Taiwan's democracy absent a China that, at some point in the future, could threaten US primacy. AEI and its kind are nothing more than poster boys for the U.S. arms industry and the hardliners who seek to contain China. To them, Taiwan provides a convenient cover. Nothing more. ... Until left-leaning think tanks add their voices to the chorus and come to Taiwan's assistance for principles that are truly based on a belief in the value of democracy, hawks in China and experts the world over will have good reason to doubt that US voices pretending to care for Taiwan are not doing this for cynical, if not more obscure, reasons."

YOUNG